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Governor Doyle Appeals FEMA Decision for Tornado Disaster Aid

Governor Jim Doyle today formally submitted an appeal to the Bush Administration and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), requesting that they reverse their earlier decision to deny federal disaster aid to three Wisconsin counties impacted by the August 18, 2005 tornadoes.

"This disaster aid is critical to help rebuild the homes, and lives, of families and businesses affected by this disaster," Governor Doyle said. "Exactly two months after the tornado hit, there are still unmet needs to both the public and private sectors that must be addressed through a Presidential Disaster Declaration," Governor Doyle said.

On August 25, Governor Doyle requested federal disaster assistance for Dane, Richland and Vernon Counties after 28 tornadoes struck southern Wisconsin, killing one person and injuring 23 people. An F3 tornado touched down in Dane County causing a 17 mile long and half mile wide path of destruction. More than 400 homes were damaged and 67 were destroyed.

Tornadoes also struck the Village of Viola and six townships in Richland and Vernon Counties. A total of 58 homes occupied by low-and moderate-income residents sustained damage. Many of these homes were underinsured or not insured. The tornado also damaged electrical and transportation infrastructure and municipal buildings in the affected communities.

Last month, FEMA denied Wisconsin's request for assistance, citing the "damage was not of such severity and magnitude as to be beyond the capabilities of the state and affected local governments."

In the appeal letter, Doyle also pointed out Wisconsin has been hit hard this year with other disasters which the state did not request federal disaster aid. Those emergencies included the Cottonville Fire in Adams County that occurred in May and recent flooding in early October in Northwestern Wisconsin (including Ashland, Barron, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, and Rusk counties).

In recent weeks, Governor Doyle announced the Wisconsin Department of Commerce has provided two large grants to help with the recovery efforts. The Village of Viola received a \$600,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) – Emergency Assistance to help with the costs to the infrastructure and Richland and Vernon Counties will share another \$821,800 in CDBG-Emergency Assistance Grant to help low and moderate income residents repair or replace homes damaged by the August 18 tornadoes.